

Prepared Testimony of the City of New Haven, Department of Police Services
Respectfully submitted to the Transportation Committee
Public Hearing, February 16, 2011



City of New Haven
John DeStefano, Jr.
Mayor

Good Afternoon Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for Senate Bill 6178. My testimony is based on my thirty-three years of experience in law enforcement in three different communities. Regardless of where I've served, all communities want to be safe and issues of traffic safety remain a top concern. Today, law enforcement agencies are faced with the new challenges of a changing environment; first we are challenged to do more with less and second, new technologies are distracting the driving population more than ever so the need for traffic enforcement is increasing every day. I am here, as Police Chief of the City of New Haven, to advocate support for a senate Bill to move the State forward towards embracing the standard of nationally accepted traffic safety camera technology that has proven to increase road safety, reduce traffic accidents, and save lives.

Since the 1990s, communities have used red light cameras as a low-cost way to police intersections. The number of cities embracing this technology has increased twenty fold from 25 in 2000 to about 500 communities a decade later. The extant literature supports the fact that intersection enforcement is difficult and often dangerous. In order to stop a red light runner, officers usually have to follow the vehicle through the red light, endangering themselves as well as other motorists and pedestrians (<http://www.trafficsafetycoalition.com>). This, of course, occurs only in those instances when law enforcement has a presence during such incidents; we've all witnessed questionable driving practices of motorists at unattended intersections and you probably wondered, *'Where's a cop when you need one...'*

The City of New Haven recorded over 3300 property damage traffic accidents in 2010 and over 2300 traffic crashes which resulted in personal injury; 20% of the entire population of New Haven received motor vehicle citations for traffic law infractions; these striking numbers for a city with a population of 124,000. More alarming is the fact that in 2010, there were 16 traffic fatalities recorded in New Haven compared to 11 the previous year, an increase of 45%! While not all of these accidents can be attributed to red-light violations, a large percentage of these accidents are a direct result of a failure to obey traffic control signals. The proposed technology solution would benefit our city greatly; it would serve to educate the public and make them aware that stopping these violations is a priority for law enforcement. Traffic safety cameras are designed to improve safety and promote compliance with the law at intersections. Use of such

devices is especially critical at or near intersections surrounding our schools. Detection by red light devices is irrefutable evidence of a law violation; those who wish to contest such violations are still entitled to due process but the State's case can be supported without any initial risk to an officer and without the costs associated with an officer's presence in court and away from neighborhoods they are sworn to protect.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak on this bill.

Sincerely,
Frank Limon
Chief of Police, New Haven CT